

# WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR NORTHWEST WISCONSIN COUNTIES

SEPTEMBER 2003



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

## Unemployment trends mixed in Northwest Wisconsin

The number of unemployed in the northwest region declined in August but not enough to reduce the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for the Northwest Wisconsin region in August was 5.3 percent, the same as it was in July but higher than the 4.8 percent unemployment rate of August 2002. Typically, employment declines in August as summer activities wind down. This is especially true for area youth camps, summer classes at area campuses, and temporary workers hired to fill in for full-time workers taking vacations.

Estimates released by the Department of Workforce Development reported lower unemployment rates in August in 43 of the 72 counties in the state including six of the ten counties in Northwest Wisconsin. The Wisconsin unemployment rate, not seasonally adjusted, declined to 5.4 percent in August from 5.5 percent in July. When seasonally adjusted however, the rate increased from 5.6 to 5.9 percent.

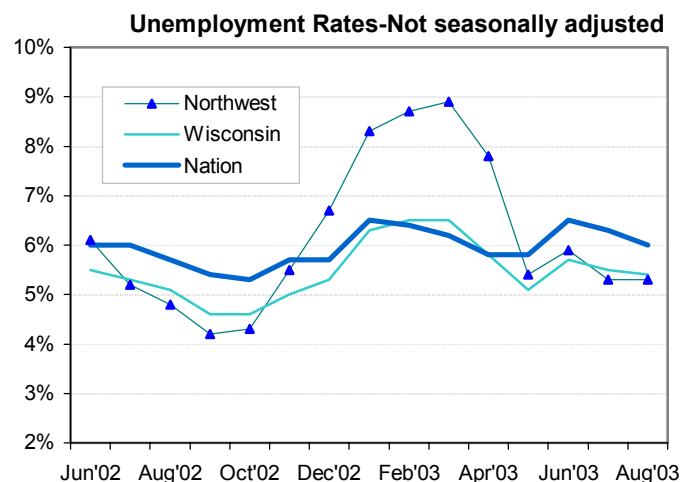
The national unemployment rate of 6.0 percent in August, not seasonally adjusted, was higher than both the state and regional rates. The national rate is higher than one year ago,

as is the unemployment rate in Wisconsin and in most counties of the state. In spite of reduced unemployment numbers in August, only 17 counties statewide reported a decline in unemployment rate compared to one year ago but three of those counties, Ashland, Burnett, and Rusk, were in the northwest region.

In Ashland County the unemployment rate declined from 7.8 percent in July and 7.3 percent last August to the current rate of 6.9 percent. In Burnett County the August unemployment rate of 3.3 percent was down from 3.7 percent in July and from 4.2 percent one year ago. And, in Rusk the 5.2 percent unemployment rate in August is lower than 5.4 percent in July and 5.3 percent of one year ago.

The counties of Bayfield, Iron and Taylor also reported unemployment rate reductions during August but had higher rates compared to one year ago. The unemployment rate in Bayfield County declined from 4.9 percent in July to 4.5 percent in August, in Iron County the rate dropped from 7.1 to 6.6 percent, and, in Taylor the rate declined from 4.6 to 4.4 percent.

Four counties in the region, Douglas, Price,



	Jun'02	Jul'02	Aug'02	Jun'03	Jul'03	Aug'03
Northwest	6.1%	5.2%	4.8%	5.9%	5.3%	5.3%
Wisconsin	5.5%	5.3%	5.1%	5.7%	5.5%	5.4%
Nation	6.0%	6.0%	5.7%	6.5%	6.3%	6.0%

## Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin counties: Current month - August 2003

	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02
Civilian labor force	9,255	9,476	8,944	8,253	8,401	7,937	8,360	8,545	7,919	23,253	23,638	22,865	3,390	3,470	3,312
Employed	8,617	8,741	8,295	7,878	7,992	7,584	8,088	8,227	7,590	21,925	22,325	21,791	3,165	3,224	3,109
Unemployed	638	735	649	375	409	353	272	318	329	1,328	1,313	1,074	225	246	203
% unemployed	6.9	7.8	7.3	4.5	4.9	4.4	3.3	3.7	4.2	5.7	5.6	4.7	6.6	7.1	6.1
	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02
Civilian labor force	7,436	7,482	6,948	7,181	7,157	7,010	11,097	11,264	11,148	11,152	11,243	10,602	8,329	8,458	8,064
Employed	7,013	7,115	6,612	6,806	6,767	6,641	10,598	10,797	10,710	10,659	10,731	10,175	7,825	7,968	7,661
Unemployed	423	367	336	375	390	369	499	467	438	493	512	427	504	490	403
% unemployed	5.7	4.9	4.8	5.2	5.4	5.3	4.5	4.1	3.9	4.4	4.6	4.0	6.1	5.8	5.0

\* not seasonally adjusted

## Industry Employment Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin: Current month - August 2003

(Employment in thousands)	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02
Total Nonfarm	9.2	9.3	9.2	4.7	4.7	4.4	5.4	5.4	5.2	18.1	18.1	17.7	2.3	2.3	2.3
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.3
Manufacturing	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.4	0.4	0.4
Trade	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	3.2	3.3	3.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
Transportation & Utilities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	1.9	1.9	1.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.6	2.6	2.5	2.3	0.4	0.4	0.3
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	3.4	3.4	3.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total Government	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.3	2.3	2.4	2.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02	Aug '03	Jul '03	Aug '02
Total Nonfarm	6.8	6.8	6.5	6.0	5.9	6.0	7.4	7.5	7.7	9.3	9.3	9.1	6.1	6.1	6.1
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Manufacturing	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.2	0.6	0.6	0.5	2.8	2.8	2.9	1.0	1.1	1.1
Trade	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	0.9	1.0	1.0
Transportation & Utilities	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Financial Activities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Education & Health Services	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.8
Leisure & Hospitality	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.5	1.5	1.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.8
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.5
Total Government	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.9	1.9	2.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.2

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2002 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

Sawyer, and Washburn, reported an increase in the number of unemployed from July to August and were among the 20 counties in the state with higher unemployment rates. The increases in the number of unemployed were small but when coupled with employment reductions resulted in higher unemployment rates. In Douglas County the unemployment rate rose from 5.6 percent in July to 5.7 percent in August and was a full percentage point higher than one year ago. In Price County the rate increased from 4.9 to 5.7 percent, while in Sawyer County the rate rose from 4.1 percent in July to 4.5 percent in August. In Washburn County the rate increased from 5.8 to 6.1 percent in August.

The decline in employment this year was greater than in previous years and most of those losses occurred in manufacturing and government. For the most part, job reductions in both industries are typical for August. There were nearly 200 fewer jobs in manufacturing and government employment was down by over 100 jobs. This was the second month of reductions in manufacturing contrary to trends in the state that show manufacturing employment beginning to recover.

There were also job losses in transportation and utilities and those losses are not typical for late summer. Since most of the reductions occurred in Douglas County it would seem that they are associated with the closure of Fleming Companies Inc. in June. Employment in transportation and utilities declined for the second straight month in Douglas County.

Even as employers in these industries were reducing the number of workers other employers were hiring. Employers in leisure and hospitality added 150 workers and in professional and other services added 85 workers. Still, the total number of jobs in the northwest declined from 75,500 in July to 75,400 in August.

Because of lay offs that continue to occur, especially in manufacturing, the number of residents filing claims for unemployment compensation benefits has not declined significantly. In mid-August there were 2,307 claims filed by residents of Northwest Wisconsin compared with 2,272 in the same week one year ago. That number does drop by mid-September to just over 2,000 but also remains higher than one year ago.

**Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: [WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI](http://WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI)**

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